**Structured Small Group Program Template**

**Title:** How to get what you want

**Goal/ Purpose**

The purpose of this group is for students to gain the knowledge of how to write specific, measurable, achievable, real, and timely goals as well as make plans to achieve these goals and evaluate the effectiveness of their goals in order to continue their education and achieve success in future career goals (ASCA, 2005).

**Population**

The group is for at-risk high school females, ages 14 to 15, who have received at least one referral for class disruption and are failing one of their core classes (i.e., English, math, or science). The group will consist of six members.

**Rationale/ Need**

According to a study conducted by O’neill (2004), students who learn to set goals have an increased sense of responsibility, which leads to empowerment of the student and an increase in academic achievement. This is due to the ongoing assessment and quality feedback that these students get as they learn the process of goal setting. While learning to set goals, students should learn that part of that process is self-reflecting on what they are doing well and what they need to improve in as well as reflecting on if they reached their goal, what went well during the process, and what should be adjusted (O’neill, 2004). The school in O’neill’s study used the SMART goals acronym, which translates to specific, measurable, achievable, real, and timeline goals. One educator at the school remarked that teaching SMART goals teaches students a process for goal setting that they can use throughout their lives to help them achieve in whatever they choose to do.

Rader (2005) suggested six steps to goal setting for students and teachers. These steps included choosing a specific goal and writing it down, deciding a time when the goal will be achieved, developing a plan to achieve the goal, visualizing oneself accomplishing the goal, working hard and not giving up on the goal, and self-evaluating.

The focus of this group is female students. It was chosen not to do a mixed-gender group because some research has shown that females do better when males are not around. Ding and Harskamp (2006) found that female dyads were able to use problem solving skills and solve physics problems more effectively than mixed-gender groups.

Galotti, Kozberg, and Gustafson (2009) focused on at-risk youth and the positive decisions that they can make using their overall goals or values. Youth who are delinquent, abuse substances, or are truent, are considered at-risk (Galotti, Kozberg, & Gustafson, 2009). It is also suggested that they may lack cognitive abilities of “typical” adolescents (Galotti, Kozberg, & Gustafson, 2009), which supports this group’s goal of teaching students the goal writing process and encouraging them to create their own academic goals. This group will increase the knowledge of the goal writing process and why they are important, as well as assist students in writing their own goals, implementing their goals, and evaluating their goals in order to decrease discipline behavior and increase their grades.

A needs assessment will be conducted. The needs assessment will consist of identified normative needs through discipline records and student grades for the previous marking period. Student grades, as well as behavioral tallies (as described in the assessment section) will serve as baseline data. Identified felt needs through teacher survey will also be conducted determining the influence discipline problems have on the classroom environment, whether or not teachers think that the problem behaviors exhibited by the students affects class time and learning, and if they think a group on learning about and writing goals for the students who are failing and causing discipline problems would be needed in the school (see Appendix A).

**Theoretical Orientation**

Solution focused brief therapy (SFBT) is a solution focused, goal-oriented theoretical orientation (Corey, 2012). The goal of SFBT, according to Corey (2012), is to help clients identify solutions to their problems and in doing this, determine what works and what does not work. Questions will be used to help better understand the members’ experiences and to help them relate their goals to their academic achievement (Corey, 2012). If students need help writing goals the “miracle question” utilized by many SFBT therapists will be used to help guide group members (Corey, 2012).

Reality therapy will also be used. Like SFBT, reality therapy is also psychoeducational, which is the type of group that will be conducted with this group of students (Corey, 2012). The goal of reality therapy is help group members engage in new, productive behaviors that will allow them to achieve their goals (Corey, 2012). The goal writing process utilized by this group allows students to not only set a goal for themselves, but to also make a plan for how to achieve these goals by giving themselves a time frame, determining how they will know if they achieve their goals, and reflecting on what works and what is not working throughout the entire process. While there is no specific pattern or technique used by reality therapists, this goal of this theory is for individuals to “evaluate their lives and decide to move in more effective directions,” (Corey, 2012) which this group ultimately has the same goal.

**Ethical. Legal, and Multicultural Issues**

This group consists of students in the school who are minors. Their parents must sign a consent form (see Appendix B) in order for them to participate (ASCA, 2005; Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). The students should also give verbal or written assent to participate. In the informed consent, it should describe the purpose and goals of the group as well as confidentiality and the limits to confidentiality. Parents should be made aware that it is best to keep what happens in group in group, but that under certain circumstances (i.e., risk of suicide or self-harm, disclosure of intent to harm others, abuse, or a law suite) confidentiality will have to be breeched, parents will be notified, and possibly reported to the appropriate authorities. While it may be ideal to keep information about what a certain child says in group confidential, parents do have the legal rights to know what their child said in group, but not the legal rights to what other children said in groups (Erford, 2010). It should also be made clear that confidentiality is expected, but cannot be guaranteed (Erford, 2010).

There may also be multicultural issues brought up in the group. This group is for females only, but within this group there may be a diverse background of cultures and ethnicities. Each individual’s culture or ethnicity should be respected and acknowledged rather than just ignoring the role of culture in the lives of the members of the group (Erford, 2010).

**Recruitment and Screening**

Referrals will be accepted through teachers, parents, students, and administrators as well as behavioral documents and grades. Students referred must meet the criteria of failing at least one core curriculum class and have at least one behavioral referral. Students will be screened and those with behavioral referrals for violence or aggression will not be appropriate for the group. The behavioral referrals that will be appropriate for this group will be disruptive behavior referrals such as talking out of turn during class or leaving the classroom without permission. Pre session interviews will also be conducted with the students who were selected for the group in order to provide them with information about the group, assess issues and if they match the group, address their concerns and questions about the group, and begin to build rapport. Students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds as well as socioeconomic status (SES) will be selected in order to form a heterogeneous group and be more diverse. Students will use their commonalities of failing a class and receiving behavioral referrals as a means to form cohesion within the group setting. Parents of students who are chosen for the group setting will be sent an informed consent to read and sign in order for students to participate. Students will also be given an assent form in order to provide them with the same information and allow them to assent to participate in the group.

**Structure**

The psychoeducational group is a six session closed group that will be six weeks in duration. Each session will be from 2:00-2:55 pm once a week during study hall. The session will be held in the counseling office conference room. This room has a table for writing as well as space to move the table in order to form a circle for group discussion.

**Core ASCA Standard(s)**

A:A3.1 Take responsibility for their actions.

A:A3.2 Demonstrate the ability to work independently, as well as the ability to work cooperatively with other students.

A:B1.3 Apply and study skills necessary for academic success at each level.

A:B1.7 Become a self-directed and independent learner.

A:B2.1 Establish challenging academic goals in elementary, middle/junior high and high school.

A:B2.2 Use assessment results in educational planning

A:B2.4 Apply knowledge of aptitudes and interests to goal setting.

A:B2.5 use problem solving and decision-making skills to assess progress toward educational goals

A:B2.6 Understand the relationship between classroom performance and success in school.

A:C1.6 Understand how school success and academic achievement enhance future career and vocational opportunities.

C:A1.6 Learn how to set goals.

C:A1.7 Understand the importance of planning.

C:B1.1 Apply decision making skills to career planning, course selection, and career transition.

C:C1.1 Understand the relationship between educational achievement and career success.

PS:A1.3 Learn the goal setting process

PS:B1.9 Identify long- and short- term goals.

PS:B1.10 Identify alternative ways of achieving goals.

PS:B1.12 Develop an action plan to set and achieve realistic goals

\*All ASCA standards from ASCA (2005).

**Core State Academic Standard(s)**

* “construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others” (Maryland State Academic Standards Algebra I, 2011).

Students in this group will discuss with the group if their goal was achieved during the termination session. Group members will construct an argument based on the measurements that they developed in their initial goal. Group members will positively critique other members’ goals or processes if goals were not met in order to assist members in rewriting their original goals.

* “demonstrate comfort and independence in collaborative groups…” (Maryland State Academic Standards Language Arts, 2011)

Members must develop cohesion and collaborate effectively during the group in order to have effective working sessions.

* “brainstorm and make connections to issues in material under study” (Maryland State Academic Standards Language Arts, 2011)

This will be evident by their ability to brainstorm goals and make connections to goal setting in school and their life after they leave school.

* “demonstrate independence in decision-making, goal setting, and deadlines” (Maryland State Academic Standards Language Arts, 2011).

Students will make decisions about which goals to set, set the goals, and evaluate the goals by the termination date.

**Objectives**

**Goal:** The purpose of this group is for students to gain the knowledge of how to write specific, measurable, achievable, real, and timely goals as well as evaluate the effectiveness of their goals in order to continue their education and achieve success in future career goals.

**Objective:** Students will write their own goal that addresses each of the 5 criteria for writing a SMART goal (i.e., specific, measurable, achievable, real, and timely).

**Objective:** Students will develop a written plan of how to achieve their goals based on Radar’s (2005) six step process.

**Objective:** During the termination session, students will discuss what went well and what went wrong with their goals.

**Objective:** Students will write new SMART goals if their original goal was met or revise their original goal.

**Program Evaluation**

During the week before the group begins, the group leader will provide teachers of the students chosen for the group with behavior tallies. Teachers will tally the number of non-violent, non-aggressive disruptions exhibited by the members of the group for that week. The week after the group terminates, teachers will once again be given a behavior tally sheet to tally the number of non-violent, non-aggressive disruptions exhibited by the members of the group. Disruptions are expected to decrease following the group sessions. Grades from the first marking period (before the group begins) and grades from the second marking period (after the group terminates) will also be compared in the classes that the students were failing. Student grades are expected to increase following the group sessions.

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**Session 1**

**Title: How to get what you want**

**Brief Summary of Session:** The session will begin with a discussion of past attempts at completing goals. The students will learn what SMART goals are and brainstorm a list of academic, career, or personal/social goals that they would like to achieve using the miracle question.Each member will then discuss why she chose each goal and what it would mean to her if that goal were accomplished. The reasons and meanings for the goals will then be connected to each member’s academic career.

**Theoretical Orientation:** Reality Therapy and Solution-focused brief therapy

**Specific Group Technique:** Questioning, miracle question, modeling

**Duration:** 55Minutes

**Materials/ Media:** Pens/pencils, paper, handout on SMART goals (see Appendix C)

**Core ASCA Standard(s):**

A:A3.1 Take responsibility for their actions.

A:A3.2 Demonstrate the ability to work independently, as well as the ability to work cooperatively with other students.

A:B1.3 Apply and study skills necessary for academic success at each level.

A:B1.7 Become a self-directed and independent learner.

A:B2.1 Establish challenging academic goals in elementary, middle/junior high and high school.

A:B2.4 Apply knowledge of aptitudes and interests to goal setting.

A:B2.6 Understand the relationship between classroom performance and success in school.

A:C1.6 Understand how school success and academic achievement enhance future career and vocational opportunities.

C:A1.6 Learn how to set goals.

C:C1.1 Understand the relationship between educational achievement and career success.

PS:A1.3 Learn the goal setting process

PS:B1.9 Identify long- and short- term goals.

\* All ASCA standards from ASCA (2005).

**Core State Academic Standard(s):**

* “demonstrate comfort and independence in collaborative groups…” (Maryland State Academic Standards Language Arts, 2011)
* “brainstorm and make connections to issues in material under study” (Maryland State Academic Standards Language Arts, 2011)
* “demonstrate independence in decision-making, goal setting, and deadlines” (Maryland State Academic Standards Language Arts, 2011).

**Objectives:** The group will be able to identify what the acronym SMART stands for in SMART goals.

A:B1.3 Apply and study skills necessary for academic success at each level.

A:B1.7 Become a self-directed and independent learner.

C:A1.6 Learn how to set goals

PS:A1.3 Learn the goal setting process

**Objective:** Students will write academic, career, or personal/social SMART goals individually and discuss the goals and the importance of these goals as a group.

A:A3.1 Take responsibility for their actions.

A:A3.2 Demonstrate the ability to work independently, as well as the ability to work cooperatively with other students.

A:B1.3 Apply and study skills necessary for academic success at each level.

A:B1.7 Become a self-directed and independent learner.

A:B2.1 Establish challenging academic goals in elementary, middle/junior high and high school.

A:B2.4 Apply knowledge of aptitudes and interests to goal setting.

A:B2.6 Understand the relationship between classroom performance and success in school.

PS:B1.9 Identify long- and short- term goals

**Assessments**: Students will fill in a handout with the acronym SMART. Students will write an academic, career, or personal/social goal with all of the criteria necessary to be a SMART goal.

**Procedures/ Instructional Strategy:**

1. During the opening, since rapport has already been developed and cohesion is established, we will start with a check-in to see how everyone’s week went and if there is anything that needs to be talked about. This should take about 5 minutes. This is an important part of the process for most counseling theories including reality theory as discussed in Corey (2011) in order to develop rapport and cohesion.
2. Then, we will have a discussion about members’ past attempts at accomplishing goals by asking, “Tell me about the last time you wanted to accomplish something and what happened?” This should take about 15 minutes. This step is important because it will get members to begin to think about their past behavior and connect the activity that will come next on a personal level.
3. Next, the group leader will describe what SMART goals are (specific, measurable, achievable, real, and timeline), give an example of a SMART goal (I will go to class everyday this week), and explain to group members that writing out their goals allows them to have responsibility for their learning (O’neill, 2004). Students will then write their academic, career, or personal/social SMART goals after being asked, “If you had one wish what would it be?” and to use their answer to this to form a SMART goal that they can have for themselves over the next 4 weeks. This should take about 5 minutes. Rader (2005) suggests that it is important for students to write goals down rather than just to think of them or say them out loud because then they are forced to examine themselves and see their own dreams.
4. During the processing session, the group members will come back together and discuss the goals they wrote along with why each goal is important to the member and what it would mean to her if these goals were accomplished. The group leader will facilitate this discussion and model making connections between what group members’ goals and their academic career. According to O’neill (2004), when students create goals, they are more invested in their academics and more motivated. Galotti, Kozberg, and Gustafson (2009) also said that students with behavioral problems may have more difficulty making these cognitive connections, so modeling for them would be helpful. Making these connections may also help them to realize that their current behaviors must change in order for them to meet their goals, which aligns with Reality Therapy’s goal of helping group members engage in new, productive behaviors that will allow them to achieve their goals (Corey, 2011). This will take about 15-20 minutes.
5. Finally, during the closing stage, students will discuss one thing that they each learned during the group session and “own work” (see below) will be assigned. This should take about 5-10 minutes. It is important to close the session and summarize what was learned so that members are not left in the processing stage.

**Homework/ Ownwork**: Members will write a journal entry about what their life would be like if they accomplished this goal.

**Group Stage and Emerging Issues:** The stage for this session would be a working stage because we will be focusing on the group goal. The group members will be learning what SMART goals are and practicing the skills by creating their own goals.

**Session 2**

**Title:** How to get what you want

**Duration: 55** Minutes

**Brief Summary of Session:** The group leader will present information on how to achieve goals using the six steps described by Rader (2005). The students will make a plan for achieving the goal they chose from their homework using the six steps described during this session. The group will discuss possible things that may get in the way of achieving students’ goals and how to overcome these set backs.

**Theoretical Orientation:** Solution Focused Brief Therapy and Reality Therapy

**Specific Group Technique:** Questioning

**Materials/ Media:** Paper, pencils, pens, PowerPoint

**Core ASCA Standard(s):**

A:A3.1 Take responsibility for their actions.

A:A3.2 Demonstrate the ability to work independently, as well as the ability to work cooperatively with other students.

A:B1.3 Apply and study skills necessary for academic success at each level.

A:B1.7 Become a self-directed and independent learner.

A:B2.5 use problem solving and decision-making skills to assess progress toward educational goals

A:B2.6 Understand the relationship between classroom performance and success in school.

A:C1.6 Understand how school success and academic achievement enhance future career and vocational opportunities.

C:A1.7 Understand the importance of planning.

C:B1.1 Apply decision making skills to career planning, course selection, and career transition.

C:C1.1 Understand the relationship between educational achievement and career success.

PS:B1.10 Identify alternative ways of achieving goals.

PS:B1.12 Develop an action plan to set and achieve realistic goals

\*All ASCA standards from ASCA (2005).

**Core State Academic Standard(s):**

* “demonstrate comfort and independence in collaborative groups…” (Maryland State Academic Standards Language Arts, 2011)
* “brainstorm and make connections to issues in material under study” (Maryland State Academic Standards Language Arts, 2011)
* “demonstrate independence in decision-making, goal setting, and deadlines” (Maryland State Academic Standards Language Arts, 2011).

**Objective:** Students will be able to successfully identify the six steps described by Rader (2005) needed to achieve goals as shown by a fill in the blank quiz.

A:B1.3 Apply and study skills necessary for academic success at each level.

A:B1.7 Become a self-directed and independent learner.

**Objective**: Students will be able to successfully use the six steps to write their own steps to fulfill the goals they created during the last session.

A:A3.1 Take responsibility for their actions.

A:B1.7 Become a self-directed and independent learner.

A:B1.3 Apply and study skills necessary for academic success at each level.

PS:B1.12 Develop an action plan to set and achieve realistic goals

**Objective:** As seen by observation, students will be able to discuss possible set backs from achieving their goals and work collaboratively to assist others in brainstorming alternatives if they do get set back.

A:A3.2 Demonstrate the ability to work independently, as well as the ability to work cooperatively with other students.

A:B2.5 use problem solving and decision-making skills to assess progress toward educational goals

PS:B1.10 Identify alternative ways of achieving goals.

**Assessments**: Students will complete the fill in the blank quiz on the six steps to goal setting as described by Rader (2005) before the session and after as a pre-test and post-test assessment. Students will apply the six steps to goal setting to their own goals by writing their steps on paper. Students will discuss the possible set backs during group.

**Procedures/ Instructional Strategy:**

1. Opening: The session will begin by going around and asking students for comments on their week. The last session will be reviewed and the homework assignment will also be reviewed. Members will discuss which goal they decided to do and why they chose that goal. This will take about 10 minutes.
2. Working: The six step process as described by Rader (2005) will be presented to students. The leader will use psychoeducation to present this information using a PowerPoint presentation. This will take about 10 minutes.
3. The members will individually make a plan following the six step model for their specific goal. This will take about 10 minutes.
4. Process: The members will come back as a group and discuss possible things that could get in the way of implementing their goals. Members will assist each other in brainstorming possible solutions to their problems. This should take about 15 to 20 minutes.
5. Closing: The session will be reviewed by members describing one thing that they learned and how they can apply it to their life outside of the group. Own work will be given (see below).

**Homework/ Ownwork**: Review your goals daily and chart your progress in your journal noting things that were difficult, easy, helpful, or hurtful as well as how you felt when you were able to accomplish one of the steps you made (if you did accomplish a step).

**Group Stage and Emerging Issues:** The stage for this session would be a working stage because we will be focusing on the group goal.

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**Appendix A**

Needs Assessment

Teachers,

Please respond to the following questions honestly and return them to me at the end of the staff meeting. Your answers to these questions will help determine the need for a group in the school to work on setting goals with students in order to make them more responsible for their academics.

Thank you for your time and assistance!

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Grade level: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Please rate the level that you agree with these statements:

1. There are students in my class who are disruptive to the learning environment.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly Strongly

Disagree Agree

1. There are students in my class who are failing.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly Strongly

Disagree Agree

1. There are students in my class who would benefit from group counseling on goal setting.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly Strongly

Disagree Agree

Please list the following students who are disruptive, failing, and/or you would refer to this group \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B**

**School Name (HERE)**

**Parent/Guardian Consent for Individual and Group School Counseling Services**

This is to inform you that your student, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, has been referred to the school counselor by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for concerns related to:

Academic \_\_\_\_\_ Behavior \_\_\_\_\_\_ Social \_\_\_\_\_\_ Personal \_\_\_\_\_\_

School Counselor will conduct counseling services via:

🞏Individual counseling 🞏 Small group counseling sessions

Topics to be covered during the counseling sessions may include one or more of the following:

🞏Emotional Concerns 🞏Academic Performance

🞏Behavioral Concerns 🞏Interpersonal Relationships

🞏Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Counseling sessions are generally 20 -30 minutes. All counseling sessions will take place in the school building in an atmosphere that supports the confidential nature of the sessions.

**Confidentiality:**

It is the ethical and legal responsibility of the counselor to safeguard students from unauthorized disclosures of information given in the context of counseling sessions. Therefore, information revealed between the counselor and student during the counseling session is confidential. It is the counselor’s hope that the parent, teacher, and/or administrator be involved in the helping process while maintaining counselor-student confidentiality. The limitations to confidentiality include:

1. When student poses danger to self, others, or the property of others.
2. When counselor suspects abuse or neglect.
3. Upon authorization of parent/student.
4. Under court order.

In some circumstances school counselors may be required to breach confidentiality as a matter of school policy. These limitations will be discussed with students during initial counseling sessions. Also, in group counseling sessions, the importance of confidentiality is stressed but cannot be guaranteed between group members.

**Consent:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the contents of this informed consent.

(please print name)

I give my child permission to participate in the proposed counseling activities.

Parent/Guardian Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C**

Worksheet for Session #1

**S**

**M**

**A**

**R**

**T**